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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN MEDIA THEMES, MARCH 6-12, 2006:
MUBARAK'S REGIONAL TOUR, REFORM AND DEMOCRACY, PRESS
FREEDOM, IRAN NUKES.

11. Summary: Throughout the week, all papers highlighted President Mu and European trip, and commentators analyzed his role and message to importance as a counter-balance to the U.S. While simultaneously arg Egypt as a regional power-broker, columnists turned inward to demand momentum on domestic reform and democracy. The issues of press freed nuclear program continued to dominate news and commentary, and the an Rights Report received considerable coverage. End summary.

12. Mubarak's tour. All papers headlined with Mubarak's tour of Euro states last week. Editors-in-chief, as well as columnists seized the Mubarak's role as the "right leader" to "explain the real situation i the West (unsigned editorial, leading pro-government daily, Al-Ahram, 350,000, March 11). Others used the tour as an occasion to call on A "solve Arab issues rather than complain about American and Western pl (editorial, independent daily, Nahdet Misr, circulation 8-15,000, Mar March 9 editorial contrasted the "wisdom" of Mubarak as a "regional l "irrational acts" of the U.S. "as a world leader" and called the timi given the "U.S.'s threats to punish Egypt." Many rallied around Muba leadership and raised expectations of his abilities. On March 11, th pro-government weekly, Al-Akhbar Al-Yom (circulation 340-400,000) arg Egypt's fate to be the wise voice on Arab issues" and the editor-in-c government daily, Al-Gomhouriyya (circulation 70,000) praised Mubarak a repeat of the Iraqi scenario in Iran would have more serious conseq that "Europe listens to the wise voice of Mubarak." At least one col of Mubarak's "efforts to tour Arab countries in defense of Iraq", loo whether he would succeed in leading the region given that "the weakne opposition parties is hindering Egypt's national role" (pro-governmen circulation unconfirmed, March 11).

13. Reform and Democracy. While the press was praising Mubarak for h Europe and the region, many commentators were pressing for more refor democracy in Egypt on many fronts. Speculation that the emergency la extended again in the Parliament spurred defensive statements from in Nahdet Misr, who challenged Speaker of the Parliament, Fathy Sorour, misconstrue the people's call for a change in the constitution as a c of legitimacy and stability" (March 8). Al-Ahram's unsigned editoria March 11 argued on behalf of continuing reform and democracy movement the notion that "reform should slow down because people are pre-occup economic situation" was "shortsighted and nave." According to the p for political reform has become a public demand" and "freedom for civ interest of the regime." A column in Al-Ahram on the same day argued countries, "The most effective weapon to fight foreign intervention i freedom and democracy." Al-Masry Al-Yom's senior columnist quoted a Brotherhood official, who called on the public "not to depend solely make changes, but also on the media, free thinkers and writers and th themselves."

14. Press freedom. The issue of press freedom continued to appear pro opinion pages. Early in the week, columnists were reacting to the an columnists in independent dailies, Al-Masry Al-Yom and Nahdet Misr, a the cessation of the case was positive, "this does not ensure" the is law, and that "someone has an interest in preventing its passage." On government daily, Rose-Al-Youssef printed a full interview with Speak Parliament, Fathy Sorour, on the draft press law, in which he assured would "also apply to opinion leaders" and that "the People's Assembly as soon as it is received." He also explained that the bill must "en freedom of opinion and citizens' rights, and must ensure that penalti to violations." On the same day, regional newspaper, Al-Sharq Al-Aws Masry Al-Yom printed articles on the sentencing of a female journalis for defaming a judge in Alexandria in an article that appeared in ind Fagr, in 2005. With the news of the sentence, Sorour's words did not columnists, as critical opinions continued through to the end of the government weekly magazine, Al-Akhbar Al-Yom's March 11 edition featu contribution by the president of the press syndicate who accused the "corruptly blocking" the new law. On March 12, opposition daily, Al-W an announcement by Minister Mufeed Shehab that the government is "alm drafting the law" next to his "refusal to comment" on the ruling agai journalist. Some voices used the opportunity to criticize "lack of e Al-Gomhouriyya printed a contributing article from a professor who en law to "prompt a discussion with journalists" about mis-reporting and columnist in Al-Ahram on March 6 defended journalists' frequent use o attack as a response to "lack of true information that can be printed

15. Iranian Nukes. This week's papers continued to focus on the Irani the increasing pressure by the U.S. and the IAEA on Iran. While most the U.S. for its tough stance, many also focused on the potential for asked Iran "whether the merits of its nuclear program will outweigh t against it" (Rose-Al-Youssef daily's editor-in-chief, March 10). The exemplified through Al-Ahram's March 12 senior columnist, Salama Ahme argued that "the U.S. is repeating the Iraq and Libya scenarios." Thi

by Al-Akhbar's Mohamed Abdel Moneim Mourad who asked readers "not to American nuclear hype" and to prevent the U.S. from "making the same Iraq." Salama castigated "Arab countries for giving in to the U.S. t lacking any strategic visions." The news of the U.S. agreement with maelstrom of critical opinion, most similar to the separate March 12 Al-Ahram, which asserted that Bush's agreement with India "again esta principal of double standards."

16. Human Rights Report. The human rights report received considerable open-minded and defensive. On March 10, pro-government, independent dailies published articles of the report, with independent daily, Al-providing lengthy excerpts and opposition daily, Al-Wafd, provided a section on Egypt. Al-Masry Al-Yom continued coverage on March 11, giving prominence to the report, and quoting a number of politicians and law report on Egypt very harsh, although it includes true and objective c in Nahdet Misr on March 12, endorsed China's declaration that the report hypocritical, and urged the GOE to say as such and "to listen to its wait for an American evaluation."

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